

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ADP-00 SCA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

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SCA- MISS HARPER

NEA- MR. DAVIES

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P 042316 Z MAY 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

INFO USMISSION NATO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 085468

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CPAS, LY, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH COMPANIES ON LIBYAN PASSPORT
PROBLEM

1. AF ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWSOM CHAIRED MEETING MAY 4
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WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF OIL COMPANIES OPERATING IN LIBYA.
SCA AND NEA WERE ALSO REPRESENTED.

2. NEWSOM REVIEWED BACKGROUND TO CURRENT IMPASSE NOTING QADHAFI' S DESIRE TO PROMOTE USE OF ARABIC AS A WORLD LANGUAGE, EFFORTS TO ENFORCE ARABIC IN PASSPORTS LAST JANUARY WHICH WERE SUBSEQUENTLY UNDERCUT BY LARG EXEMPTIONS FOR PRACTICAL REASONS; AND RE- IMPOSITION OF STRICTER REQUIREMENTS BEGINNING ABOUT APRIL 28. HE SAID THAT SHOULD WE AGREE TO LIBYAN REQUIREMENT OF PROVIDING AUTHENTICATED TRANSLATIONS INTO ARABIC OF PASSPORT INFORMATION IN US PASSPORTS, IT COULD SET UNWELCOME PRECEDENT WHEREBY ANY NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES COULD DEMAND SIMILAR TRANSLATIONS. NEWSOM SAID WE HAVE SO FAR STOOD ON 1963 UN RECOMMENDATION THAT PASSPORTS BE ONLY IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE ISSUING COUNTRY PLUS IN ENGLISH OR FRENCH IF THE LANGUAGE OF THE ISSUING COUNTRY WAS NOT ENGLISH OR FRENCH.

3. NEA DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAVIES EXPRESSED VIEW THAT AN AGREEMENT BY GOVERNMENTS TO ACCEDE TO QADHAFI' S DEMANDS ON THIS ISSUE WOULD BE WIDELY HAILED BY MASSES IN OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, INCREASING QADHAFI' S PRESTIGE IN ARAB WORLD.

4. NEWSOM REVIEWED THE NOTE RECEIVED FROM LARG IN WASHINGTON AND IN TRIPOLI. IT WAS NOTED THAT THERE WAS SOME AMBIGUITY IN THE LANGUAGE USED IN THE NOTE AS TO WHETHER LARG WAS INSISTING THAT TRANSLATIONS BE MADE BY USG ITSELF OR WHETHER TRANSLATIONS NEEDED TO BE GLUED OR AFFIXED IN SOME OTHER WAY INTO PASSPORTS. HOWEVER, IT WAS AGREED THAT CHIEF LARG OBJECTIVE WAS THAT TRANSLATIONS BE AUTHENTICATED BY THE GOVERNMENT USING THE PASSPORT.

5. NEWSOM SAID WE HAVE NOT YET RESPONDED TO THE LIBYAN NOTE AND NEXT STEP IS UP TO THE USG AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS. HE SAID WE HAVE PROPOSED A NUMBER OF OPTIONS TO EMBASSY TRIPOLI ON WHAT OUR NEXT STEP SHOULD BE AND HAVE CONSULTED IN THE PAST WITH OTHER NATO GOVERNMENTS ON THE PROBLEM. OUR FIRM POSITION NOW IS ONLY THAT ANY
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ARRANGEMENT REACHED WITH THE LARG SHOULD BE ON THE BASIS OF RECIPROCITY. BEFORE REACHING OUR DECISION ON THE NEXT STEP, WE WISHED TO REVIEW THE SITUATION WITH US COMPANIES MOST DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE PASSPORT PROBLEM IN LIBYA AND TO SEEK THEIR VIEWS.

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6. WILLIAM GREENWALD OF EXXON SAID THAT PASSPORT PROBLEM

RAISED IMMEDIATE QUESTIONS REGARDING THE COMPANY OPERATIONS AND MORALE OF EMPLOYEES. MOST COMPANIES EMPLOY LARGE NUMBER OF BACHELORS AT THE TECHNICIAN LEVEL WHO NORMALLY SPEND 55 DAYS IN LIBYA AND 18 DAYS R AND R IN EUROPE. WITH THIS ROTATION PROGRAM IT WOULD ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE OPERATIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE CLOSED DOWN DUE TO LACK OF PERSONNEL. IN ADDITION, MANAGERIAL STAFF RESIDENT IN LIBYA WITH FAMILIES NEED TO TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY PERIODICALLY FOR CONSULTATIONS. ALSO CHILDREN STUDYING OUTSIDE LIBYA ARE DUE TO RETURN TO LIBYA SOON FOR SUMMER VACATIONS TO BE WITH PARENTS. COMPANIES FEAR THAT IF TRAVEL RESTRICTED DUE TO PASSPORT PROBLEMS, COULD LEAD TO BAD MORALE, INDUCING SOME EMPLOYEES TO RESIGN OR REQUEST TRANSFER, MAKING IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO FIND PERSONNEL WILLING TO SERVE IN LIBYA.

7. GREENWALD ALSO SAID THERE COULD BE A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PASSPORT PROBLEM AND THE NEGOTIATIONS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY RE PARTICIPATION. HE SAID THE COMPANIES HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL SO FAR IN HOLDING THE

LINE AGAINST UNREASONABLE LIBYAN PARTICIPATION DEMANDS, BUT IF IT BECAME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN OPERATIONS DUE TO PERSONNEL SHORTAGES, PRESSURES ON COMPANIES TO CAPITULATE ON PARTICIPATION ISSUE MIGHT INCREASE.

8. NEWSOM SAID DEPT APPRECIATES THAT OIL COMPANIES ARE A VERY SPECIAL HOSTAGE IN THIS PROBLEM AND WE HAVE NO DESIRE TO KEEP THEM IN THIS DIFFICULT POSITION. HE WONDERED HOWEVER WHETHER, IF OIL OPERATIONS SUFFER, LIBYANS THEMSELVES MIGHT NOT HAVE A CHANGE OF HEART OUT OF THEIR OWN INTEREST. QUESTION REMAINS HE SAID HOW MUCH
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TIME IT WOULD TAKE FOR THESE PRESSURES TO DEVELOP. NEWSOM AGREED IT WAS ALSO POSSIBLE LONG IN TIME COULD PERMIT THE ENTRY OF NECESSARY TECHNICIANS, BUT NOT PERMIT THE ENTRY OF FAMILIES, SCHOOL TEACHERS FOR OIL COMPANY SCHOOL, OR DOCTORS FOR OIL COMPANY CLINIC, LEAVING THE COMPANIES WITH SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

9. GREENWALD AGREED WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT THE PASSPORT ISSUE WAS NOT SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AGAINST THE OIL COMPANIES. HOWEVER, HE SAID HE BELIEVED THE LIBYANS HAD PROVED CAPABLE OF EXPLOITING ANY SITUATION FOR THEIR BENEFIT AND HE EXPECTED THAT THE ISSUE WOULD BE USED AS PRESSURE POINT ON THE COMPANIES IN PARTICIPATION NEGOTIATIONS.

10. JOHN TINNY OF CONTINENTAL OIL SAID LIBYAN REGULATIONS LAST JANUARY HAD EVENTUALLY BEEN MODIFIED AND HE WAS HOPEFUL, IF COMPANIES HANG ON, IN TIME WORKABLE ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE MADE.

11. GREENWALD NOTED THAT THE PROBLEM REGARDING FAMILIES AND SCHOOL TEACHERS COULD REMAIN. HE SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT THE DEPARTMENT COULD WORK SOMETHING OUT TO PERMIT THE FREE TRAVEL OF PERSONS TO LIBYA, BUT IF THIS COULD NOT BE DONE, THE COMPANIES WILL OF COURSE UNDERSTAND. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE BRIEFING AND FOR THE OPPORTUNITY FOR COMPANIES TO PRESENT THEIR VIEWS.

12. NEWSOM THANKED COMPANY REPS FOR THEIR PRESENCE AND SAID DEPT WOULD KEEP THEM ADVISED. RUSH

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